DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 440 315 CG 029 833

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TITLE	Teenage Fatherhood and Delinquent Behavior. Juvenile Justice Bulletin.
INSTITUTION	Department of Justice, Washington, DC. Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention.
SPONS AGENCY	National Inst. on Drug Abuse (DHHS/PHS), Rockville, MD.; National Inst. of Mental Health (DHEW), Rockville, MD.; National Science Foundation, Arlington, VA.
REPORT NO	NCJ-178899
PUB DATE	2000-01-00
NOTE	9p.
CONTRACT	96-MU-FX-0014; 96-MU-FX-0012
AVAILABLE FROM	Juvenile Justice Clearinghouse, P.O. Box 6000, Rockville, MD 20849-6000. Tel: 800-638-8736 (Toll Free); Fax: 301-519-5212.
PUB TYPE	Reports - Research (143)
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	*Adolescent Behavior; *Adolescent Development; Adolescents; At Risk Persons; Behavior Problems; *Delinquency; *Early Parenthood; *Fathers; Longitudinal Studies; Secondary Education; *Urban Youth

ABSTRACT

This report highlights two studies that are part of the Program of Research on the Causes and Correlates of Delinquency sponsored by the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP). The Rochester Youth Development Study and the Pittsburgh Youth Study have tracked a sample of urban males through their teenage years. These studies provide an assessment of the significant risk factors for teenage paternity, specifically the role of delinquency in early fatherhood. These risk factors come from a wide range of domains, including race, area characteristics, family structural position, parental stress, school, early sexual activity, peers, individual characteristics, and deviant behaviors. The consistency of agreement in the Pittsburgh and Rochester studies reinforces the conclusion that, while there is no single explanation or decisive risk factor for teen fatherhood, early delinquency is one of the most significant risk factors for becoming a teen father. Each study also reports additional findings concerning cumulative risk and the impact of teen fatherhood on subsequent delinquency. The Rochester study shows that an accumulation of risk factors dramatically heightens a boy's risk of becoming a teen father, while the Pittsburgh study finds that the impact of becoming a teen father may spur even greater delinquency. (GCP)

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U.S. Department of Justice
Office of Justice Programs
Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention

ED 440 315

Shay Bilchik, Administrator
January 2000
JUVENILE JUSTICE BULLETIN

Teenage Fatherhood and Delinquent Behavior

Terence P. Thornberry, Evelyn H. Wei, Magda Stouthamer-Loeber, and Joyce Van Dyke

This Bulletin is part of the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) Youth Development Series, which presents findings from the Program of Research on the Causes and Correlates of Delinquency. Teams at the University at Albany, State University of New York; the University of Colorado; and the University of Pittsburgh collaborated extensively in designing the studies. At study sites in Rochester, New York; Denver, Colorado; and Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, the three research teams have interviewed 4,000 participants at regular intervals for a decade, recording their lives in detail. Findings to date indicate that preventing delinquency requires accurate identification of the risk factors that increase the likelihood of delinquent behavior and the protective factors that enhance positive adolescent development.

Boys who become teenage fathers are also likely to engage in a constellation of other problem behaviors such as noncriminal misbehavior (status offending), disruptive school behavior, and drug use. This link between young fatherhood and other problem behaviors has been established by past research, but until now, there has been no clear, comprehensive evidence of the factors that put a boy at risk for becoming a father while he is still a teenager. A clearer understanding of the precursors of teen fatherhood is needed if teenage paternity and its far-reaching consequences are to be reduced. Teenagers who engage in delinquent acts and other problem behaviors create immediate consequences for themselves and for those around them, but when they also father children, there may be serious repercussions for many years to come, even for generations.

Teenage fatherhood has received very little scrutiny—far less than teenage pregnancy or motherhood. Yet, like teen motherhood, teen fatherhood has many negative educational, financial, social, health, and other developmental consequences for these young men and their children (Lerman and Ooms, 1993; Furstenberg, Brooks-Gunn, and Chase-Lansdale, 1989; Furstenberg, Brooks-Gunn, and Morgan, 1987). National surveys have indicated that somewhere between 2 and 7 percent of male teenagers are fathers, with higher rates among inner-city and African American youth (Sonenstein, Pleck, and Ku, 1993). The rate of teen fatherhood grew substantially between 1986 and 1996 when, according to the National Center for Health Statistics, 23 of every 1,000 males between 15 and 19 years of age became fathers (figure 1). This figure, however, probably undercounts the actual number of teenage fathers. Information on fathers is often missing from birth certificates, contributing

From the Administrator

Much has been written about the negative consequences of teen motherhood for both mother and child, but little attention has been paid to teenage fathers. The research described in this Bulletin lays the groundwork for a closer look at the problems of teenage fathers and their children.

The Rochester Youth Development Study and the Pittsburgh Youth Study examined risk factors for teenage paternity, specifically the role of delinquency in early fatherhood. Both studies concluded that early delinquency is a highly significant risk factor for becoming a teen father. In addition, the Rochester study reported that the possibility of teen paternity rises dramatically as risk factors accumulate, and the Pittsburgh study found that teen fatherhood may be followed by greater involvement in delinquency.

More studies are needed to identify the path to teen fatherhood and its long-term impact on individuals and society. This research will help us determine what policies and programs will be most effective in providing positive alternatives for teenage boys and helping them realize that the decision to postpone fatherhood will lead to a brighter future for them and for the children they may someday have.

Shay Bilchik
Administrator

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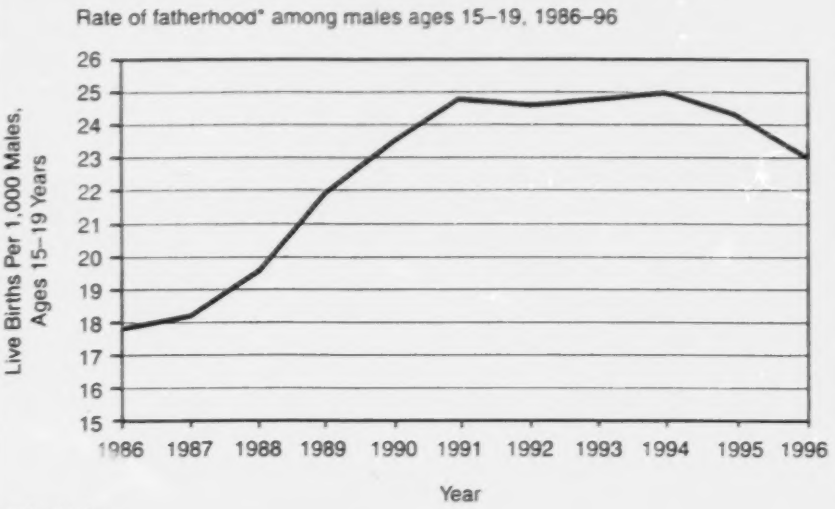
Figure 1

The rate of teenage fatherhood increased from the mid-1980's to 1991, stayed level for 3 years, and then decreased from 1994 to 1996



*Live births.
Source: Adapted from Ventura et al., 1998.

to the difficulty in assessing the prevalence of teen fatherhood.

Prior research has shown that African American teenagers are more likely to be fathers than are white or Hispanic teenagers (Lerman, 1993). Additionally, teen fatherhood has been empirically associated with boys who come from impoverished families and neighborhoods and with those who engage in delinquency and other problem behaviors. What has not been clear until now, however, is whether delinquency can be demonstrated to be a significant risk factor for teen fatherhood when other risk factors are held constant.

This question is addressed by two studies that are part of the Program of Research on the Causes and Correlates of Delinquency sponsored by OJJDP. Initiated in 1986, the Causes and Correlates program is designed to improve the understanding of serious delinquency, violence, and drug use through longitudinal studies of how individual youth develop within the context of family, school, peers, and the community. The Rochester Youth Development Study and the Pittsburgh Youth Study, both ongoing research projects under the aegis of the Causes and Correlates program, have tracked a sample of urban males through their teenage years. The resulting data provide the opportunity to answer the question: "Does prior involvement in delinquent behavior increase the risk that a boy will become a teenage father?" The answer is yes, according to both the Rochester and Pittsburgh studies. Their findings are presented in this Bulletin.

Rochester Youth Development Study

Overview

The Rochester Youth Development Study's examination of teen fatherhood was designed to identify early risk factors for increasing the likelihood of becoming a teen father. The study tracked a sample of 615 urban males from 1988 through 1996 (for more details, see "Rochester Study: Sample and Methodology"). Gathering data from regular interviews with participants and from their parents and official records, the researchers assessed a wide range of possible risk factors for teen

Rochester Study: Sample and Methodology

The Rochester study of teen fatherhood is part of the ongoing Rochester Youth Development Study of delinquency and drug use conducted by researchers at the University at Albany. A recent OJJDP Fact Sheet on the Program of Research on the Causes and Correlates of Delinquency (Browning et al., 1999) provides a summary of the research design for the Rochester Study. The specific study of risk factors for becoming a teenage father was conducted by Terence P. Thornberry, Carolyn A. Smith, and Gregory J. Howard. The sample for this study consists of 615 males (selected from the larger pool of males and females in the Rochester Youth Development Study). In this sample, 20 percent were white, 17 percent were Hispanic, and 63 percent were African American. (For further details on sample selection, see Thornberry, Smith, and Howard, 1997.)

Participants were interviewed in 12 waves, beginning in 1988, when they were in seventh or eighth grade, and continuing through 1996–97, when they were on average 22 years old. The first nine interviews were conducted at 6-month intervals with the teenagers and the adults primarily responsible for their care (usually their mothers), and the last three were conducted annually. Data were also collected from schools, police, courts, and social service agencies. Teen fatherhood was defined in the Rochester Study as becoming a father before the 20th birthday. The measurement of teen fatherhood is based on self-reports, which have a 95-percent agreement rate with parental reports.

The measures of risk factors are based on data from early waves of the study, generally between wave 1 (when the subjects were 13.5 years old on average) and wave 4 (when they were 14.9 years old on average). Because the first boys in this sample to become fathers were 15 years old at the time, the assessment of risk factors precedes the onset of teen fatherhood. Risk factors measured in the study were clustered into 10 general domains. Researchers conducted both bivariate and multivariate analyses of the data.

fatherhood across 10 domains: (1) race/ethnicity, (2) neighborhood characteristics, (3) family socioeconomic position, (4) parental stress, (5) parent-child relations, (6) educational attainment and commitment, (7) early sexual activity, (8) involvement with delinquent peers or gangs, (9) individual characteristics, and (10) drug use or delinquency.

In addition to identifying how many boys become fathers over the course of their teenage years, researchers sought to discover which were the most influential risk factors in predicting whether a young man became a teen father. Finally, they investigated what impact an accumulation of such risk factors would have on an individual teenager's likelihood of becoming a father.

Results

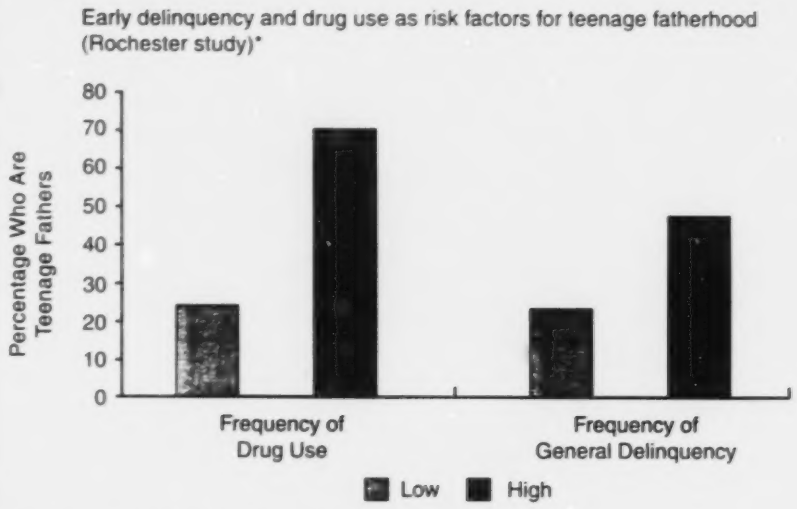
The Rochester study found a high rate of teen fatherhood: more than one-quarter of their sample (28 percent, or 175 teenagers) reported that they had become fathers before their 20th birthdays. The earliest reports of fatherhood occurred at age 15 years, when seven boys reported becoming fathers, with the rate increasing steadily until age 19.[1]

The study's analysis of the risk factors for teen fatherhood provides striking evidence that early involvement in delinquency and drug use is highly correlated with subsequently becoming a teen father, as shown in figure 2. While 70 percent of the high-frequency drug users became teen fathers, only 24 percent of the nonusers or low-users did. Similarly, while nearly half (47 percent) of the high-rate delinquents later became teen fathers, only 23 percent of the nondelinquents or low-rate delinquents did. Both relationships are statistically significant ($p \leq 0.001$).

In addition to finding delinquency and drug use to be significant risk factors for teen fatherhood, the study also found significant correlations with other factors, including race, neighborhood characteristics, parents' level of education, the youth's standardized reading score, and early sexual activity. Although teen fatherhood was not a function of any single variable, it was clearly linked to involvement in deviant behavior, according to the Rochester study.

Figure 2

Frequent drug use and frequent involvement in delinquency significantly increase the likelihood of teenage fatherhood in the Rochester sample



*Both relationships are statistically significant at the 0.001 level.

Even when researchers controlled for other variables, they found that a cluster of problem behaviors—engagement in early sexual intercourse (defined in this study as before age 16), gang membership, chronic involvement in violent behavior, and chronic drug use—substantially increased a boy's likelihood of becoming a teen father. Chronic drug use alone more than doubled the probability of teen fatherhood.

In addition to analyzing the degree of risk associated with each variable measured, the Rochester study also looked at cumulative risk: what happens as an individual's number of risk factors increases. Choosing nine risk factors significantly related to teen fatherhood, the researchers found that, as risk factors accumulated, a boy's chance of fathering a child increased sharply. The results, shown in figure 3, indicate that for young men who are at risk in only a few of these areas, the probability of teen fatherhood is also fairly low. As the number of risk factors increases, the prevalence of teen fatherhood increases too, rising slowly at first. By the time a youth accumulates five or more risk factors, the teen fatherhood rate "virtually explodes," as the Rochester study states (Thornberry, Smith, and Howard, 1997:516–517). Almost a third of those with five risk factors and almost half of those with six or more risk factors become teen fathers. Although it is clear that teen fatherhood is not a function of any single risk factor, when a young man faces numerous and often interacting risks, the chance that he will become a teen father jumps dramatically.

Pittsburgh Youth Study

Overview

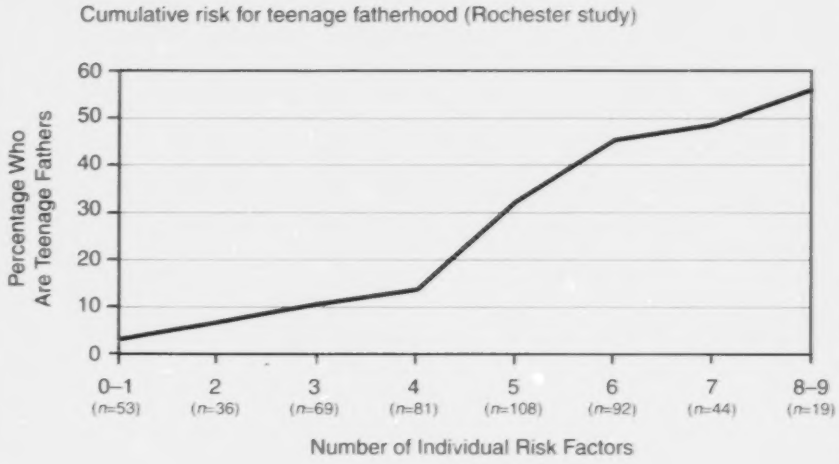
The Pittsburgh Youth Study's objective was to investigate the relationship of teen fatherhood to delinquency, both preceding fatherhood and for 1 year after the birth of the child. From 1988 to 1993, the Pittsburgh researchers followed a sample of 506 inner-city adolescent males from the public schools (for more details, see "Pittsburgh Study: Sample and Methodology"). Through regular interviews with participants, parents, teachers, and officials, researchers collected data on a large number of variables such as race or ethnicity, early sexual activity, school achievement and attachment, peer relationships, neighborhood, family, mother's level of education, participants' attitudes, individual characteristics, drug use, and delinquency.

The study sought to discover how much similarity exists between risk factors associated with delinquency and those associated with young fatherhood: that is,

[1] The researchers suggest that this unusually high rate of teen fatherhood being reported may reflect a number of factors: the city of Rochester has a high rate of teen pregnancy, as compared with other cities; the project staff established a high degree of rapport with the respondents; and the sample is composed primarily of minority youth.

Figure 3

As the number of risk factors a youth experiences increases, so too does the percentage who are teen fathers



which risk factors are associated with both and which factors are uniquely associated with one or the other outcome? In addition to investigating the relationship between prior delinquency and teen fatherhood, the researchers also compared young fathers with matched controls to look at the impact of fatherhood on subsequent delinquency: Did delinquency diminish after a boy became a teen father, did it stay at the same level, or did it increase?

Results

The Pittsburgh researchers report that 12 percent of their sample (62 teenagers) became fathers before their 19th birthdays (as the Pittsburgh study defines teen fatherhood). These 62 teenagers fathered a total of 82 children. Fatherhood occurred by age 14 in the first instance, with the rate rising steadily to age 18.

In the Pittsburgh study, while early drug use was not a significant risk factor for teenage fatherhood, delinquency was. Figure 4 shows the relationship between teen fatherhood and delinquency and drug use in the Pittsburgh sample. The proportion of high-frequency drug users who became teen fathers (16 percent) was only slightly higher than the proportion among nonusers or low-users (12 percent). However, the proportion of high-rate delinquents who became fathers (19 percent) was significantly higher than that of nondelinquents or low-rate delinquents (9 percent). Young fathers were more than twice as likely to be delinquent as nonfathers.

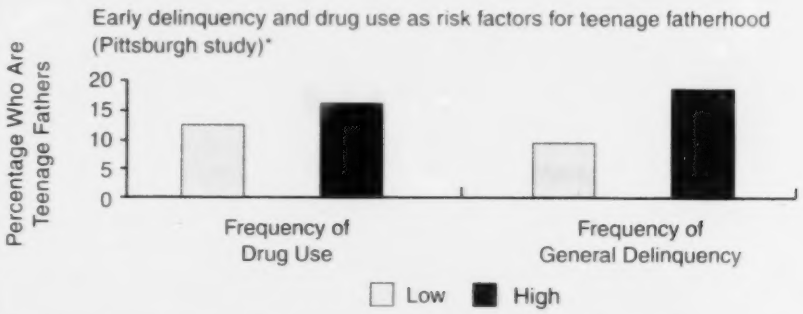
The Pittsburgh study found several other significant risk factors for teen fatherhood, including cruelty to people, being raised in a family on welfare, and drug exposure (as distinguished from drug use; drug exposure refers to having been offered drugs or having witnessed a drug deal, and is a possible index to a boy's neighborhood or peers). When no other factors were taken into account (i.e., a bivariate analysis was used), drug exposure had the highest correlation with teen fatherhood of any factor apart from race. Other significant risk factors in the Pittsburgh study that were consonant with the Rochester study's findings include race, early sexual activity, low level of mother's education, and low school achievement. When the researchers controlled for other factors (employing a multivariate analysis), being older than other boys of the same grade in school was the strongest predictor of teen fatherhood in the Pittsburgh study.

In analyzing the variables related to both teen fatherhood and delinquency, the Pittsburgh researchers found that the risk factors for teen fatherhood are a subset of the risk factors for delinquency. That is, teenage fathers demonstrate the same characteristics as young men who engage in delinquent acts; in every instance where a variable was significantly related to young fatherhood, it was also related to delinquency. On the other hand, not every factor that is predictive of delinquency predicts teen fatherhood.

The Pittsburgh study also investigated the impact of teen fatherhood on subsequent delinquency to discover whether fatherhood might reduce delinquent acts. In fact, they found the reverse was true. For this second part of the Pittsburgh study, the 62 young fathers in the sample were

Figure 4

Frequent involvement in delinquency, and to a lesser extent frequent drug use, increases the likelihood of teen fatherhood in the Pittsburgh sample



*The relationship between early drug use and teenage fatherhood was not statistically significant. The relationship between early delinquency and teenage fatherhood was statistically significant at the 0.01 level.

Pittsburgh Study: Sample and Methodology

The Pittsburgh study of teenage fatherhood is part of the ongoing Pittsburgh Youth Study on delinquency in young urban males, which is being conducted by researchers at the University of Pittsburgh. A recent OJJDP Fact Sheet on the Program of Research on the Causes and Correlates of Delinquency (Browning et al., 1999) provides a summary of the research design for the Pittsburgh Study. The specific study of the precursors of teenage fatherhood was conducted by Magda Stouthamer-Loeber and Evelyn H. Wei. The 506 teenagers analyzed in the teenage fatherhood study are the oldest of the boys in the three age cohorts from the Pittsburgh public schools that make up the sample for the larger Pittsburgh Youth Study. (For details on sample selection, see Stouthamer-Loeber and Wei, 1998.) These participants were 12–13 years old at the beginning of this study in 1988 (they are now in their early twenties). The racial composition of the sample was equally distributed among African Americans and whites and was comparable to the racial composition of the Pittsburgh public schools. About 44 percent of these boys lived with a single parent, and 36 percent of their families received public assistance.

Participants in the study were questioned by researchers in regular interviews or assessment waves, beginning with a screening wave and followed by assessment A. These assessments were conducted at 6-month intervals (five times), and subsequently at yearly intervals. Data from the first nine assessment waves (screening through assessment K) were used for this study. Information was also collected from parents and teachers, and police, court, and school records; whenever possible, information from different informants (the participant, the parent, and the teacher) was combined.

Teen fatherhood was defined in the Pittsburgh Study as becoming a father before age 19 years. Two measures of delinquency were employed. The first, serious delinquency, was defined as having committed any of the following offenses by the time of assessment A: car theft, burglary, strong-arming, attack to seriously hurt or kill, or rape. The second measure of delinquency, called varied serious delinquency, covered the 4-year period from assessment waves B through I and was defined as having committed a delinquent act in two of the above categories within a 1-year period. Thirty-seven percent of the participants had committed an act of serious delinquency by assessment A, and slightly more than one-fifth of the sample (22 percent) was classified as having engaged in varied serious delinquency subsequently, during waves B through I.

Independent variables measured in the study included participants' behaviors, attitudes, demographics, family, peers, and school performance. Statistical analyses were performed to obtain odds ratios and confidence intervals.[1] Two stepwise logistic regressions[2] were also run. For the second part of the study, investigating the impact of fatherhood on delinquency, the 62 fathers in the sample were matched with 62 nonfathers in terms of age, race, and neighborhood. For cases that reported fatherhood at wave I, data from wave K were used to examine delinquency in the year after fatherhood.

[1] An "odds ratio" expresses the likelihood of an outcome, given the presence of a risk factor, as compared with the absence of that risk factor. The "confidence interval" that accompanies a statistic describes the degree of certainty that the statistic is precise.

[2] A "stepwise logistic regression" is employed to compare two groups of individuals with respect to a particular outcome (e.g., teen fathers and nonfathers); taking multiple risk factors into account, it develops a model that predicts whether the outcome will occur.

matched with 62 nonfathers (matched controls) of similar age, race, and neighborhood. The findings are shown in table 1. A review of their records prior to becoming fathers indicates that the future young fathers were no more likely than their matched controls to be in the serious delinquent group. However, over the next 4 years, they were 2.5 times more likely than their controls to have qualified as "varied serious delinquents" (for definition, see "Pittsburgh Study: Sample and Methodology"). Fathering a child is associated with an even greater increase in delinquent behavior. In the same year that these young men reported becoming fathers, the odds of their committing varied serious delinquent acts jumped (odds ratio=7.5, meaning they were 7.5 times more likely than nonfathers to commit serious delinquent acts). In the year after they became fathers, these odds remained relatively high (odds ratio=4.2).

According to the Pittsburgh study, "young fathers tended to be troubled

Table 1

Teen fatherhood increases involvement in subsequent delinquency in the Pittsburgh sample

Delinquency before and after teenage fatherhood (Pittsburgh study)

	Percentage of Fathers	Percentage of Nonfathers	Odds Ratio (95% CI)
Serious delinquency, up to assessment A[1]	53.2	40.3	1.7 (0.83–3.43)
Varied serious delinquency, assessments B through I[1]	37.7	19.4	2.5 (1.12–5.70)
Delinquency in year before fatherhood	11.1	6.9	1.7 (0.45–6.34)
Delinquency in year of fatherhood	21.2	3.4	7.5 (1.58–35.73)
Delinquency in year after fatherhood	19.0	5.3	4.2 (1.11–16.01)

[1]See above sidebar for an explanation of these assessment periods.
CI=Confidence interval.

Program of Research on the Causes and Correlates of Delinquency

In an effort to learn more about the causes of juvenile delinquency, OJJDP is sponsoring the Program of Research on the Causes and Correlates of Delinquency. Past research indicates that many variables correlate with delinquency and that many factors tend to increase the risk of later delinquent behavior. Among these risk factors are birth trauma, child abuse and neglect, ineffective parental discipline, family disruptions, conduct disorder and hyperactivity in children, school failure, learning disabilities, negative peer influences, limited employment opportunities, inadequate housing, and residence in high-crime neighborhoods. So far, research supports the conclusion that no single cause accounts for all delinquency and that no single pathway leads to a life of crime. To date, however, research has not clearly identified all the pathways that lead to delinquency, nor has it been able to analyze the factors that cause individuals to take different paths.

Social scientists and policymakers agree that the best way to gain information on the causes of delinquency is through longitudinal studies. Because longitudinal studies involve repeated contacts with the same individuals over an extended period of time, they permit researchers to study patterns of development, to sort out which factors precede changes in offending, to predict such changes, and to do so independently of other factors. They also enable researchers to examine the differential impact of risk factors at different stages of a child's development. In brief, longitudinal studies make it possible to identify various pathways to delinquency, each with unique causal factors that, like delinquency itself, may change with time. This information is needed to develop truly effective intervention programs.

The Program of Research on the Causes and Correlates of Delinquency is an example of OJJDP's support of long-term research in a variety of fields. Initiated in 1986, the Causes and Correlates program includes three closely coordinated longitudinal projects: the Pittsburgh Youth Study, directed by Dr. Rolf Loeber at the University of Pittsburgh; the Rochester Youth Development Study, directed by Dr. Terence P. Thornberry at the University at Albany, State University of New York; and the Denver Youth Survey, directed by Dr. David Huizinga at the University of Colorado. The Causes and Correlates program represents a milestone in criminological research because it constitutes the largest shared-measurement approach ever achieved in delinquency research. From the beginning, the three research teams have worked together with similar measurement techniques, thus enhancing their ability to generalize their findings.

While each of the three projects has unique features, they share several key elements:

- All three are longitudinal investigations that involve repeated contacts with the same juveniles over a substantial portion of their developmental years.
- In each study, researchers have conducted face-to-face interviews with adolescents in a private setting. By using self-report data rather than juvenile justice records, researchers have been able to come much closer to measuring actual delinquent behaviors and ascertaining the age at onset of delinquent careers.
- Multiple perspectives on each child's development and behavior are obtained through interviews with the child's primary caretaker and teachers and from official school, police, and court records.
- Participants are interviewed at regular and frequent intervals (6 or 12 months).
- Sample retention has been excellent. As of 1997, at least 84 percent of the participants had been retained at each site, and the average retention rate across all interview periods was 90 percent.
- The three sites have collaborated to use a common measurement package, collecting data on a wide range of variables that make possible cross-site comparisons of similarities and differences.

Each project has disseminated the results of its research through a broad range of publications, reports, and presentations. In 1997, OJJDP initiated the Youth Development Series of Bulletins to present findings from the Causes and Correlates program. In addition to the present Bulletin, five other Bulletins have been published in the Youth Development Series: *Epidemiology of Serious Violence, Gang Members and Delinquent Behavior, In the Wake of Childhood Maltreatment, Developmental Pathways in Boys' Disruptive and Delinquent Behavior,* and *Family Disruption and Delinquency.*

young men who were significantly more likely than their matched controls to have engaged in varied serious acts of delinquency in the year of fatherhood and in the year after" (Stouthamer-Loeber and Wei, 1998:64). Young fathers tended to commit more covert delinquent acts than violent offenses. For example, in the year that they became fathers, young fathers were three times more likely than nonfathers to have been involved in car theft or burglary, while there was no difference between the two groups in the likelihood of their committing violent offenses.

On a number of other measures of problem behavior, according to the Pittsburgh study, young fathers appeared considerably worse off than youth in the control group. They were more likely than nonfathers to have had a court petition alleging delinquency (72 percent vs. 41 percent), to be drinking alcohol frequently (39 percent vs. 19 percent), to be involved in drug dealing (41 percent vs. 21 percent), or to have dropped out of school (60 percent vs. 37 percent).

The hopeful hypothesis that teen fatherhood might encourage young males to become more responsible and to assume the tasks of helping to establish and support a family is not borne out by this study. Instead, becoming a father appears to exacerbate an already troubled and

stressful life for these young men, at least during the first year of fatherhood.

Summary

Although research has found associations between teenage fatherhood and delinquency in the past, these studies provide a clearer assessment of the significant risk factors for teen fatherhood. These risk factors come from a wide range of domains, including race, area characteristics, family structural position, parental stress, school, early sexual activity, peers, individual characteristics, and deviant behaviors. The consistency of agreement in the Pittsburgh and Rochester studies reinforces the conclusion that, while there is no single explanation or decisive risk factor for teen fatherhood, early delinquency is one of the most significant risk factors for becoming a teen father. These two studies have differences in demographics (for example, an 85-percent minority sample in the Rochester study, with roughly equal racial distribution in the Pittsburgh study). They also differ somewhat in methodology, including differences in some variables measured and in the length of followup (6 years in the Pittsburgh study and 8 years in the Rochester study). Notwithstanding these differences, their major findings are in close agreement.

Each study also makes important additional findings concerning cumulative risk (Rochester study) and the impact of teen fatherhood on subsequent delinquency (Pittsburgh study). The Rochester study shows that an accumulation of risk factors dramatically heightens a boy's risk of becoming a teen father. The impact of becoming a teen father may in turn spur even greater delinquency, the Pittsburgh study finds.

Implications

For a teenager, fathering a child may be just one event on a continuum of deviant behaviors, but one with particularly far-reaching consequences for the father, the child, and society. Teen fathers are unlikely to be in a position to provide financial, emotional, or other parental support for their children, and in this regard can be considered poor role models. Their legacy to their children is likely to be one of socioeconomic disadvantage, poorer health, and poorer education, among other hardships.

What are the implications of these studies? In terms of policy, intervention programs to reduce teen fatherhood should focus on what these studies show to be the population at highest risk: inner-city minority youth who are involved in delinquency and drug use and who show an accumulation of risk factors. Programs for delinquent youth should contain fatherhood components that focus on this subset of risk factors in a targeted fashion. These studies also suggest that reducing teen fatherhood will require taking into account multiple and often interacting risk factors at different stages in the life cycle. Programs to improve basic skills and life options for urban youth, to address negative peer environments and lack of school success, and to demonstrate positive alternatives to early parenthood are some of the measures needed to help reorient adolescent males who may feel they have nothing to lose by fathering a child while still in their teens. In reality, however, these young men stand to lose a great deal by becoming teen fathers, as do the children they father and the society in which this cycle of disadvantage is perpetuated.

More must be learned about the antecedent factors that place young men at risk for becoming fathers in their teens and about the longer term consequences of teen fatherhood for the fathers and their children. More information is also needed about how teen fatherhood can be reduced. As the Rochester study found, about half of the young men at high risk for teen fatherhood did not become fathers; by investigating what distinguishes these young men from those who did become fathers, researchers may be able to gain important clues for reducing teen fatherhood rates.

For Further Information

For more information on OJJDP's Causes and Correlates studies or to obtain copies of other Youth Development Series Bulletins, Family Strengthening Series Bulletins, or Youth Gang Series Bulletins, contact the Juvenile Justice Clearinghouse (JJC) at 800–638–8736 (phone), 301–519–5212 (fax), puborder@ncjrs.org (e-mail), or www.ojjdp.ncjrs.org (Internet). JJC also maintains a Causes and Correlates of Delinquency Web page (www.ojjdp.ncjrs.org/ccd/index.html).

The following OJJDP Fact Sheets on related topics are available from JJC:

- *Adolescent Motherhood: Implications for the Juvenile Justice System* (Fact Sheet #50, 1997) by Rebecca A. Maynard, Ph.D., and Eileen M. Garry.
- *Responsible Fatherhood* (Fact Sheet #73, 1997) by Eileen M. Garry.

Resources for Teen Fathers

Employment Action Center—Young Dads Program
Minneapolis, MN
612–752–8800
www.eac-mn.org

The Fatherhood Project
New York, NY
212–465–2044
www.fatherhoodproject.org/

The Institute for Responsible Fatherhood and Family Revitalization
Washington, DC
202–293–4420
www.responsiblefatherhood.org

Louise Wise Services for Children and Families
New York, NY
212–876–3050

MELD for Young Dads
Minneapolis, MN
612–332–7563
members.aol.com/MELDctrl/index2.html

National Fatherhood Initiative
Gaithersburg, MD
301–948–0599
www.fatherhood.org/

National Urban League
New York, NY
212–558–5300
www.nul.org/affiliat.html

Reaching Out to Adolescent Dads
Roanoke, VA
540–857–7600, ext. 224
www.roadprogram.org/

Stanislaus Teen Education Program for Understanding Parenthood (STEP–UP)
Modesto, CA
209–525–4640
www.stan-co.k12.ca.us/iss/prevention/stepup.html

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Research for the Rochester Youth Development Study and the Pittsburgh Youth Study is supported by OJJDP under grants 96–MU–FX–0014 and 96–MU–FX–0012, respectively. The Rochester Youth Development Study is also supported by grants from the National Institute on Drug Abuse and the National Science Foundation. The Pittsburgh Youth Study is also supported by a grant from the National Institute of Mental Health.

Points of view or opinions expressed in this document are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the official position or policies of OJJDP or the U.S. Department of Justice.

The Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention is a component of the Office of Justice Programs, which also includes the Bureau of Justice Assistance, the Bureau of Justice Statistics, the National Institute of Justice, and the Office for Victims of Crime.

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